NEW LOOK * WATER ABSORBENT

Tokyo Fan

GAMES
MOVIES
ANIME
STUFF

ISSUE 2

STAR WARS

SPECIAL EDITIONS
IN DETAIL

FREE PUMP-ACTION SHOTGUN*
*Not available

RAGE RACER
DARK SAVIOR
SOUL BLADE

THE LOST WORLD

RETRO GAMES

Tokyo Fan

JULY 1997

Produced by SUNTEAM

Editor and Writer

Paul Weller

This fanzine is produced by fans for fans
We have no wish to infringe on the rights of the copyright holders of the material contained within
All pictures and text is copyright their original authors and/or companies
No reproduction without prior permission except for the purposes of comment or review

Fortune comes to those who smile.
Japanese Wisdom

CONTENTS

3 **GAMER TODAY** Mr Peach casts doubt on modern video entertainment.

5 **STAR WARS SPECIAL EDITION** We get the tweezers out and pick 'em to bits.

8 **GAME REVIEWS** *Rage Racer, Dark Savior* and *Soul Blade* scrutinized

13 **GAME PREVIEWS** What's coming up, we give them all a run round the block.

14 **OO THE PAGE** *Star Wars Chronicles* and George Lucas' *Shadow Moon*

16 **BOLLYWOOD RIP OFFS** Another shameless attempt exposed.

17 **OO THE SCREEN** *Evangelion, Macross Plus, Urusei Yatsura* and *First Contact* LD.

19 **OT THE MOVIES** Are the big name movies living up to their promises?

20 **AUDIO REVIEWS** Listen in to *Please Save My Earth, Record Of Lodoss War* and *FF IV.*

21 **RETRO GAMING** *Star Wars, Star Paws* and other fond memories await.

EDITORIAL

HELP ME OBI WAN KENOBI

Well this issue's a bit late out so I've missed the big Star Wars rush. But to me, the Star Wars films are never out of fashion so that's the theme of this issue. I was going to do a bit about Star War merchandise - the figures and stuff, but I ran out of room. Maybe next time eh?

Of course, on the PC front, thing are looking up for the fans of the trilogy. With Jedi Knight promising to be the best Doom game since the last one, and Star Wars Supremacy (previously called Rebellion) to satisfy strategy game fanatics what more could you possibly want? Well, maybe a decent ground combat sim, where you control Scout Walkers and the like. Now that would be fun!

YOU CAN'T PARK HERE

There are a several things that you'll never find in this fanzine, and here's why

1. Nintendo 64 stuff. Because I haven't got one.
2. Reviews of football games. Because I can't stand them.
3. Needless space fillers. No, honest.
4. Instructions for toothpics. Ask Douglas Adams.
5. A blank cheque

EH, WHAT A BARGAIN

I've just been to see Jackie Chan's latest movie *Rumble in the Bronx*. I must say that out of all the big name Hollywood blockbusters this year like *The Lost World* and *Batman And Robin*, none of them were as enjoyable as *Rumble*.

For many years I've been a big fan of the master of Kung-Fu comedy but I felt that his more recent films have never quite matched up to the classics like Police Story and Project A. *Rumble in the Bronx* changes this. It's one of the best films he's made in ages and it's a sheer joy to watch. It's hilariously funny at times, without the usual cheesyness of Hong Kong films and Jackie has really gone all-out to show Western audiences what he's all about.

It amazes me how after so many films, he can still find more and more original ways of fighting - his skill at using everyday objects in a fight really show him off, his stunts are still amazing, and there's not a special effect in sight.

Do yourself a big favour and go and see it.

OOOH

And anyone who can tell me what the last three heading were from wins a free mention in next issue. Aren't I good to you?

Paul Weller, Editor

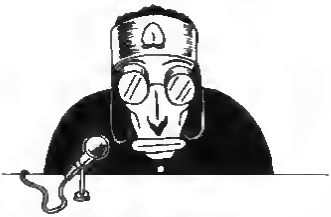
Video Games
Probably the most fun you can have on your own, video games have progressed dramatically from the days of blocky, unrealistic graphics and beeping tunes (although some of the oldies are still the best.)

Anime/manga
Anime (pronounced a-nee-may) is the word used for animation from Japan. It is aimed at an older audience than western animation and can, at best, be up there with the finest that Hollywood can provide. Manga is the word for Japanese comics, which are very similar to it's animation. They are usually far longer, and a lot more fluid that western comics and can be found in most comic shops, although a few graphic novels have made it into UK bookshops

Issue 3 of Tokyo Fan is due out around October 25th. To order, send a cheque or postal order made out to Paul Weller, to:

Cost - £1.50 per issue including p&p.
Order now to avoid missing out!

Mr Peach on Games Today



In an effort to encourage public debate, Mr Peach says some things that you may find offensive (or just plain dumb).

There are many people who would say that games today are just not a patch on what they used to be. These people aren't always talking about the old days of the Spectrum and Commodore 64, but the PC Engine, Megadrive and Super Famicom (SNES); the most recent consoles before the 'Next Generation' 32-bit big boys.

I can't honestly say that I'd entirely disagree with them.

Of course, most new and casual gamers today would say that this was a load of old cobblers. After all, how can an ageing sprite-based affair be as involving as the state-of-the-art polygon experiences of today? Well that is missing the point entirely. It isn't the technical side that was better - it was the emotional side.

The easy way to explain this is to drag up the 'Good Old Days' syndrome as an excuse and say that it's human nature to be overly nostalgic and critical of the present, and to be fair it's possibly true. But even so, I feel that some of the points in this article are valid enough to be worth further consideration.

PC Kid showed originality in platform gaming

From my own personal experience, the premature death of the import only PC Engine signalled the long gaming winter that was to follow. But what am I saying? That the PlayStation, Saturn and N64 are poor machines? On the contrary, I think that they are all very fine machines, with some excellent and high quality games. But it seems that the elements that made the earlier games so great are now few and far between. This is partly due to the developers themselves, and partly due to the hardware.

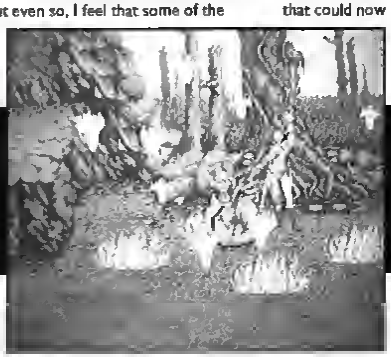
To me, it feels as if a whole generation of games consoles has been missed out. For example, the 16-bit machines could in no way achieve a perfect arcade conversion of something like Power Drift, or even a much underrated classic, Alien Storm. But now the 32-bitters are here, these games are considered to primitive and out of date by most people. There are a host of polygon-less coin-ops out there that could now be converted without trouble, but it's just too late.

In fact, when the 32-bits first came out, the games I looked out for most were the 2D 8-bit style, that I know and still love today.

Another regret I have about the current machines is the use of FMV for intros. Now a console can display any amount of footage with FMV, I find myself rarely impressed. With the previous consoles, you were wowed as the next skilfully programmed intro blew you away. There are exceptions of course, like Soul Blade and Tekken 2, but the same sense of awe is no longer there.

In a way, I feel that the hardware has become almost too good. You rarely gasp with amazement as a screen high sprite leaps into play, wondering how they got away without a hint of flicker or clash. Machines now can handle enough polygons that you aren't often truly impressed by what you see, from a technical perspective at least.

There is also the problem of the software in general. In the last few years, what once were magical places of endless enjoyment and free-flowing cash, arcades are now just dead boring. Oh, a driving game. Oh, a fighting game. Oh, another etc... Most of the genres that made gaming so fun have either vanished entirely, or become distorted freaks of their former selves, and this has leaked into home gaming too. Sometimes, I just



Golden Axe kept me playing for years! I still go back to it now and again

Newzealand Story: just good, solid fun

want to hold up a copy of something like Wonderboy on the Master System and shout "Look, guys! *This* is a good game!"

Gaming has become a quick-fire hobby Most big name games are geared at play in short bursts, rather than hours on end Save positions are more frequent than ever, and games that you can really get your teeth into are not abundant enough Tomb Raider is a fine example of what we need more of.

The change in trends against 2D games can be partly attributed to the gaming press With the launch of these 'next generation' consoles, the magazines were waiting for games that made these machines stand out from the previous bunch. Something that 'could never be done before.' So developers are now far more wary of doing anything that, say, a Megadrive, albeit with worse audio and visuals, could handle

There are other gaming elements that are now frowned on by the magazines, that don't need to be bad at all Linear gameplay is one thing they're always moaning about. While freedom is good, there is a lot to be said for the level-after-level routine, that gives you a definite purpose and a goal, with no worries that you may miss anything on the way.

Also, originality is held to be one of the most important things a game must have I agree, but I think that developers sometimes take this a little to literally Lack of originality has forced most software houses to pass by the old faithful 2D shoot 'em up and platform games. They are considered unoriginal and dated. But it is not the genres that

Originality with familiarity Parodius was one of the best shoot 'em ups around in it's time, and it's offspring are still going strong today

are lacking, it is the imaginations behind the games themselves All you need is enough exciting and clever ideas *within* the genres and you've got a game that's a joy to play

Give me a pad of paper and a team of programmers and I'll rule the world.

Thankfully, companies like Capcom realise that there are just some elements of 2D play that can't be successfully translated in 3D. Look at Crash Bandicoot. Lovely graphics, but the three dimensions make it a chore to play rather than a pleasure. The skill involved in a good 2D platformer is different, and it would be a crime if these games vanished for ever.

Another thing that GTE's my goat is this obsession with realism. Are Sonic, Mario or Parodius realistic? Is Out Run? No, but it's just damn fun. Give me that over Sega Rally any day (and Sega Rally is a decent enough game as it is). Mechwarrior? Sure, it fun for a while, but the realistic stomping about for hours soon gets a bit tedious.

Not everything I've said here is perfectly fair In fact, some of it is probably, with a second thought, a little untrue But now and again you have to have a jolly good rant.

Software companies should produce more games of the old school. Just make sure that there well designed to begin with and they can't go wrong.

Thankyou for listening.

JAPAN'S TOP FIVE GAMES

1. **Final Fantasy 7 (PlayStation)**
2. **IQ - Intelligent Qube (PlayStation)**
3. **Parapa Rapper (PlayStation)**
4. **Pocket Monster (Game Boy)**
5. **Blast Dozer (Nintendo 64)**

NEWS STAR WARS CAST UPDATE

Casting continues on the Star Wars prequels, but here is the latest list, straight from the web site Starwars.com. Check it out!

Ewan McGregor - Obi Wan Kenobi
Liam Neeson - A Jedi Knight
Natalie Portman - The Young Queen
Keith Lloyd (The kid in Jingle All the Way) - Anakin Skywalker
Ian McDirmid (The Emperor in Jedi) - Emperor Palpatine
Terrance Stamp (General Zod in Superman 2) - ?

NEW IN JAPAN

All the latest releases from the East.

GAMES

King of Fighters '96 (PlayStation - SNK)
Darius Pack Plus (Saturn - Konami)
Final Fantasy Tactics (PlayStation - Square)
Baby Universe (PlayStation - Sony)
Yuke Yuke! Troublemakers (N64 - Enyx)
Sonic Jam (Saturn - Sega)
Waku Waku 7 (Saturn - Sunsoft)
Metal Angel 3 (PlayStation - Pack In Video)
Welcome House (Saturn - Imagnia)

VIDEOS

Key The Metal Idol Ver 15
Konami All Star Festa '97
City Hunter Special - Goodbye My Sweetheart
Cyber Marionette J Act 6

COMPACT DISCS

Evangelion' Death
Slayers - Try Treasury
Shamanic Princess Vol 1
Power Dolls Vol 1 - Wedding March
Jungle De Iko! 2

COMICS

Dragon Quest - 21
Complex 192 - 6
Angelic - 2
Shadow Run - 3
Fire Emblem - 9

STAR WARS
TRILOGY SPECIAL EDITIONS

TOKYO FAN presents the ultimate, most comprehensive and definitive opinions on the biggest movie event since, well....Star Wars.

I am writing this article as a long time crazy fan of the Star Wars movies I've seen the movies countless times, got the books, soundtracks and enough merchandise to keep me happy.

I must admit that I'm a bit of a purist when it comes to altering movies. But even so, I was just about as excited as you can get when I first got wind of the Special Editions. Now they are here in all their Big Screen glory, it's time to see whether the promise lives up to the reality.

I've split up each film into the bad and good bits, and how I think they're improved or have suffered. I also mention some of the missed opportunities which really SHOULD have been dealt with.

STAR WARS - A NEW HOPE - SPECIAL EDITION -

When A New Hope first came out it had almost no publicity whatsoever. Quite the reverse now of course, and much has been made of the changes. Yet another detailed description of the Jabba scene etc etc is unnecessary so I'll get straight down to the nitty gritty.

GOOD BITS

Nice bits of sky on Tatooine.

Quite subtle but very attractive, like the clouds above the R2 canyon, and the blue starred sky by the Sandcrawler, where it used to be dawn.

Mos Eisley & Dewbacks.

What can I say? A superb and very lengthy series of shots that show off the city for what it really is. Nice to see the droids and swoop bike from Shadows Of The Empire giving a bit of continuity. Good floating droid thing, and some smashing CG Dewbacks. And the Falcon blasting off! What more could you want?

Jabba.

The most famous new scene, and a lovely and important addition, especially with Boba Fett looking on. What a suit!

Han and the Stormtroopers.

Unsuspected and very funny is the scene where Han chases the Stormtroopers around a corner in the Death Star - now coming face to face with a whole squadron! This bit works perfectly and looks as though it had been intended from the start.

The Final Battle.

From the Falcon's arrival on Yavin's moon, there is so much new footage that it's hard keep up with it all. The new shots add greatly to the battle, and are added seamlessly to the previous footage, keeping much of the same style of the original. Oh, and when the Death Star blows up, you get a vertical shock wave from it.

The new Mos Eisley including crashed space cruiser

Filming the new stormtrooper desert sequence.

BAD BITS

The new shot of the Jawa's Sandcrawler coming over the ridge

When I first saw this 'updated' sequence my previous good mood took an immediate slump. What's this? My bleedin' Micro Machines Sandcrawler looks more realistic than this Tonka Toy! Oh what have you done?

On reflection, and after having seen it a few more times, it's not quite that bad. But what was wrong with the old shot? It was far less modelly and moved with more weight to it. Please, Lucas, if this ever comes out on video, drop this bit.

The Ronto that walks in front of the camera for a bit too long

The Ronto walks in front of the camera for a bit too long.

Greedo shoots Han first.

My first gripe with this is that Han's classic line 'Yes, I bet you have!' is cut short to 'I bet you have!' WHY?

Secondly, I have to agree with what some 'Netters have been saying about 'needlessly sanitising Han's actions.' Han is what he is, a smuggler and an expert in self-preservation. He hasn't stayed alive this long by *letting* someone get a shot in first.

Lucas apparently changed this shot so that Han didn't kill in cold blood, and said that this was intended all along. But by doing this, an important part of Han's character development from film to film is stripped away. Unnecessary tampering.

SPECIAL EDITION 2?

Luke and friends.

One major scene which fans have been clamouring to be put back into the movie is where Luke spots the space battle above Tatooine and shoots off to

tell his friends at the Anchorhead power station. This scene, I think, is vastly more important to the Jabba meeting, as it gives a background on Luke's situation and why he is so keen to leave. Also it introduces Biggs and gives even more meaning to his death than the extra scene on Yavin 4.

The Cantina.

Every Star Wars buff knows that Lucas was never happy with the Cantina scene. So what do they do? Add two more rubbery masks with very little articulation (actually, it was the same mask, but from different directions). I was expecting some major digital tweaking, with faces frowning, smiling and just moving about a bit more. How hard can it be?

Lightsabres.

Why oh why, when spending so much money on the new scenes, could they not fix up such a simple problem such as the lightsabres.

Point 1. When Ben Kenobi's sabre is pointed directly at the camera during the duel, it looks like a fizzling mess.

Point 2. After Kenobi's death, Vader walks towards the closing blast doors - his lightsabre is white where the STILL have forgotten to colour it.

Point 3. They could have at least made some of the sabres 'extend' as they should instead of just popping on.

Who's that man?

One of the biggest goofs in Star Wars is the scene where they've just blasted off from Mos Eisley, and they've all strapped themselves in. You get a shot of Han in the cockpit and on his left, green from the surrounding lights is

Cloud City Interior with added windows!

someone plodding down the passageway! Surely some quick digital work could have fixed the problem.

VERDICT

When I first saw the Special Edition I was in two minds about it. A lot of scenes that needed fixing were untouched, and much that was fine had been tampered with. But the improvements are more than adequate to make up for any shortcomings, and being able to see it on the big screen is a blessing. I'm just not sure that this can be called the 'definitive' Star Wars.

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK - SPECIAL EDITION -

To me, Empire is not only the best of the Star Wars movies, it is also probably the finest movie EVER made, thanks to some beautiful scenery, a dramatic storyline and the most rousing film score ever written. For me to really enjoy it, any alterations had to be perfect.

A CG Falcon lands at Cloud City

GOOD BITS

Wampa

When Luke is in the Wampa cave, you never see much of it, except at close range. Now there are several shots of it chewing away at Luke's Taun Taun, and howling when it's arm get lopped off! It's cut it so well that you'd believe it hadn't been changed at all.

Chasing the Falcon

Slave I fans are in for a treat here. After the Falcon sets off to Bespin (when the Imperial fleet goes into Hyperspace), there is an extra shot of Fett's ship as it chases down the heroes.

Approach to Cloud City

My God. MY GOD! Coming in to land, the Falcon now flies through a detailed CG Model of Cloud City in all it's glory. It looks so good I nearly wet myself. Also, a quick flythrough is shown, which pans up to Leia strutting around in the window of a new building.

Best of all, and I would never have forgiven them if this hadn't been added, is a Tibanna gas mine (as recently designed by Star Wars veteran Ralph McQuarrie), floating in a cloud in the foreground. Simple but brilliant.

Cloud City Interior

Whereas Cloud City was previously loads of enclosed and claustrophobic corridors (unlike production paintings), the effects team have really gone to town in opening it up. Every opportunity has been taken in adding windows and open areas in the background, quite subtly at times, to give the expansive feel that was originally intended. One minor gripe though is a dodgy bit of matong where Chewie's fur goes in front of a window, but it's not too bad.

Also new is a corridor and amazing exterior shot when Lando gives the announcement to leave Cloud City. Watch carefully as it's not on for long though.

The Top Hatch.

When Lando opens the Falcon's hatch to get to Luke, the previous shots had a bright white light streaming in. Now, an extra hatch has been added, and a more realistic exterior is in place.

Vader's trip to the Executor

Out of all the new bit's in Empire, I was not aware of, or prepared for this major piece of reworking. Vader is now seen walking out to his Lambda-Class Shuttle, which is also seen flying out towards his Super Star Destroyer and Landing in the docking bay. The ramp then lowers and he strides out! Despite this being ripped from Jedi, it's a different angle and doesn't really show. Vader's voice has been redubbed though, and sounds just a little too different to be comfortable (a friend of mine said he was doing a Julian Clary impression!).

CLEAN UP

Thankfully, unlike A New Hope, many of Empire's most hideous effects have been rectified. Speeders are no longer transparent, big blocky matte areas are mostly gone (although some remain), and Luke's dire drop down the central chute of Cloud City has been re-done far more realistically. Also those horrid grey windows when Vader looks out of the Executor's windows are gone for good. The Star Destroyer approaching Hoth is still see-through though, as is the Falcon when it leaves Hoth.

Also, I noticed difference in dialogue. When Han is cutting open the Taun Taun, Luke was mumbling a lot more, and when Luke falls down the core of

Cloud City, he now screams. Whether these are new bits, or were lost in the video versions, I don't know (A New Hope also has differing sounds and dialogue).

My only big gripe is that the timing of the music when Slave I takes off with Han inside has been knocked out, and I feel this takes something away from the drama of the scene.

THE VERDICT

The best film ever is now even better. I couldn't have hoped for anything more. Cloud City now looks as it always should, the extra Vader bits are a welcome bonus (despite the voice). This isn't a Special Edition. This IS The Empire Strikes Back.

RETURN OF THE JEDI - SPECIAL EDITION -

As it stands, Jedi has pretty much been left as it is, with the exception of a couple of major scenes.

GOOD BITS

Jabba's Band.

Yep, gone is the old song and dance routine and in is a new one, complete with dancers, drummers and new footage of Oola falling down into the Rancor pit. The new Sy Snootles is purely computer generated, and sings along with her Yuzzem partner to a fitting piece of music. I know Lucas always wanted this scene to be more than it was, but I wish it was just a little longer. Also it's a shame to see Lapti Nek has been replaced, but the new tune woks well enough.

Banthas.

Just before Jabba's Sail Barge pans into view, you get a lovely shot of a herd of

Yuzzem prototype maquette

Banthas making their way across the desert plain. Also, that horrid stop motion shadow walking across the Sail Barge has been fixed.

Sarlacc pit.

The Sarlacc now has a beak! Protruding from the hole, this bit of CG work chomps at people who previously fell into it's mouth.

Death Star explosion.

Nothing much different, but it looks a bit better now.

The End.

WOW. Gone is the Ewok song. In is a stunning new piece from John Williams. Where the Rebel fireworks light the sky, a whole new scene of celebrations have been added. The camera pans across the roofs of Mos Eisley as a Skyhopper shoots overhead, crowds cheering below, then on to a gorgeous shot of Bespin, and finally the very first on-screen appearance of Coruscant itself. Note the stormtrooper being chucked around by the crowd and the giant statue of the Emperor being pushed over in the distance. Worth the ticket price in itself.

BAD BITS

Well, two classic songs have been replaced, but I think I can live with that.

CHANCES MISSED

Rancor.

Well, the Rancor is as dodgy as ever. It's not just the matte lines, or the fact it looks like a puppet, but the difference in brightness between it and Luke. Surely something could have been done?

The Emperor's 'flicky bit'.

Has no-one else noticed this or am I going mad? On several of the close-ups of the Emperor's face (while he's on the throne) there is this awful black blob, painted on the side of his face at the left (on line with his eye). Now I can't begin to fathom why this was there in the first place, but they didn't fix it! It sticks out so obviously that it couldn't be more obvious if there was a neon flashing sign above it saying 'Look here.' Argh, it makes me cringe!

THE VERDICT

Well, it's as good as ever, even with some of the faults still there. I am pleased. And they're out on video in August (Don't know if this is the UK release date though. Probably not).

THE FOUR MOST ANNOYING THINGS THAT CAN, AND ALWAYS DO, HAPPEN AT THE CINEMA

1. THE CHAIR KICKERS.

You've just sat down, picked at your undergarments, shuffled around and finally got yourself comfy. The lights dim, the film starts. WHUMP! You're tempted to turn, but think better of it. After all, it must have been an accident. WHUMP! Yes, it's the chair kickers come to get you! But worse than the one's that do it deliberately are those people with unnaturally long legs, that knee you in the back as they try to settle down. They don't realise that the impact on your seat feels like there's a couple of rhinos mating behind you. But you put up with it. You suffer, until...

2. THE SMELL.

Oh, not some strongly identifiable bodily smell. This is the warm smell, a mix of strawberry and popcorn, but stale as though it's already been through the respiratory systems of the entire audience. And unlike a bodily smell, this one does not gently disperse. No, it wafts across every couple of minutes. Your entire mind is now focused away from the movie, and you're counting the seconds until the smell attacks again. But even now, you can hear something...

3. THE SOUND.

Two rows back and four people to your left. Someone is eating popcorn. Not like any human being eats, but more like the rhythmic munching of a cow. CHAK CHAK chakchakchak. CHAK CHAK chakchakchak. On and on it goes, never ending. CHAK CHAK chakchakchak. You could handle it if only the perpetrator wasn't positioned so precisely that the sound ONLY enters into your left ear. It's like being partially deaf, the agony making you turn your WHUMP! Oh, them again. The frustration is slowly building up inside. You missed the last five minutes of dialogue and wonder what's going on on screen. Is it getting hot in here?

4. THE STIG.

You get the impression that the doors have opened behind you. A few seconds later the seats begin to wobble. You turn and see it. Stig of the Dump incarnate. But this Stig has his eyes on the seat next to yours. He shuffles along with an ape-like gait, filthy hair over his eyes. And sits next to you. Then he gets out his popcorn. CHAK CHAK chakchakchak. And there's that smell. Your skin is crawling, trying to manoeuvre itself over the opposite side of your body. He exhales. Slowly, gracefully, you pass out.

RAGE RACER

I may be someone who is always moaning about the constant stream of driving games on console, but there are some that make it all worthwhile. The big question - is Rage Racer one of these games? Let's start at the beginning, eh?

The FMV intro sequence is very, very classy indeed. Namco are becoming experts at it which bodes well for their CG movie project sometime in the future. Anyway, from the title screen, you can access several things. The Grand Prix (the game proper), time attack, Save & Load, Sound Test and Options (control, volume etc). After selecting Grand Prix you get yet another series of option, similar to Ridge Racer, but far more involved.

The waterfalls provide some smashing scenery. They even hiss as you drive by!

Firstly, there is the usual car shop, where you can choose from a variety of models. You can also tune up you current model to increase it's performance if a brand new vehicle is out of your budget. For the picky people you can also change the colour of your car and best of all, the name and design on the front. This is achieved by either choosing from a selection of preset background and foreground images, or manually drawing your own! The mini art package is very rudimentary though, with nothing so advanced as a fill command. And using a joypad to draw makes it especially difficult, so to create anything approaching acceptable, you'll need a lot of patience and time. But it's worth the effort in the end - your design will also appear on a roadside sign on track 2 so look out for it.

The races themselves are split over 3 main tracks. As with the previous Ridge Racer games these are all part of one main track, with diversions taking you to the relevant areas. When you've got these sussed out, you go up a class where to competition increases.

With each race that you win placing 1st, 2nd or 3rd, you gain some cash. This is vital for overall success as you need to soup up or trade in your vehicle to get anywhere as the classes progress.

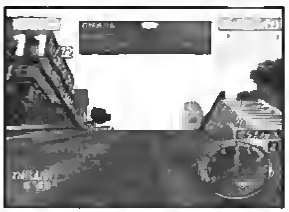
The gameplay of Rage Racer is naturally very similar to that of Ridge Racer and Ridge Racer Revolutions. But despite being very familiar with Revolutions in particular, I still found this an engaging and utterly enjoyable

I bet Namco never thought to see Sonic The Hedgehog in one of their games!

THE COURSES

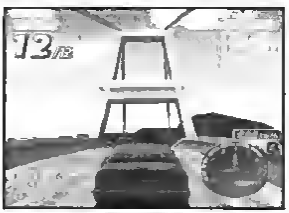
Course 1 - Mythical Coast

This is a fairly standard course. Some hills, some tight bends and some straights to really get your speed up.



Course 2 - Over Pass City

The most hilly course of the three. You may find that investing in a car with good acceleration really pays off on this level



Course 3 - Lakeside Gate

A bit of everything on this one. Some nasty sharp turns, so learn how to do the power slide! Not as tricky as Ridge Racer Revolution's third course, fortunately.

The intro to Rage Racer is another triumph for Namco. The CG cars move so realistically that you could almost be watching the real thing! It's almost like one of those classy car ads you get on TV. The only thing wrong is the glaring grammatical error: Start your engine's. Better luck next time, Namco.

game to play. The courses are designed very well with some stunning scenery - steep hills, waterfalls and the like. The graphics themselves are a little dim and colourless though - there's nothing like the attractive palm tree area in Revolutions, but I suppose they're just going for realism.

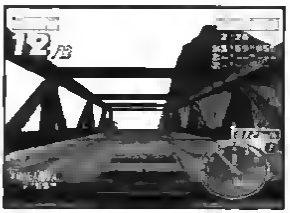
There is still a certain amount of polygon break up in this and it is very noticeable in areas like the tunnels, where the white flecks across the screen almost look like rain! There must be some way of stopping this (like putting a black mask in front of the sky background) but they don't seem to bother. Music is really good, in the same style as Revolutions, but not quite as enjoyable.

If you already own either Ridge Racer game, then you may be a little apprehensive about getong Rage Racer due to it's similarities. If you want another racing game then this is the one to get. It's just as fun to play and not quite as frustrating as you know that even if you don't make 1st, you'll get some money out of it. It is impossible to clearly split this from it's predecessors. They are all superb racing games and deserve to be in your collection.

There are loads of cool bridges to zoom under and over.

INFO BOX	VERDICT	
FORMAT: PlayStation	GRAPHICS	SOUND FX
MAKER: Namco	DIFFICULTY	MUSIC
GAME STYLE: Driving	LASTABILITY	PLAYABILITY
PAL CONVERSION: Average borders	ONE MORE GO	OPTIONS

Stonking good racing fun. Nothing more. Nothing less. Worth a look even if you've got the other two.



NEWS FOR HOBBITS

Following on from last issue's news on The Hobbit movie, it seems that I was wrong. Peter Jackson is going to be directing live action versions of The Lord Of The Rings! Cripes! How he'll manage that I don't know. Supposedly, the story will be split over three movies, but with the amount of story there, they'll need at least six! No doubt a lot will be cut out (including, sadly, Tom Bombadil who seems to be cut out of everything), but I still have faith. Now all we need is a decent movie version of War Of The Worlds and I'll be happy.

UFO DISASTER

Did anyone see the *Strange but True?* UFO debate? DEBATE? They hardly gave either side a chance to mutter a word, let alone a full scale debate before cutong in with some pre-filmed feature from earlier in the series!

The telephone survey was interesting though with 92% of the viewers believing that Extraterrestrial life has already visited Earth. Although most of the viewers were bound to be interested enough in the subject to have watched the programme in the first place, it still is quite a majority. A good sign that the public is beginning to accept the subject as a serious area for research.

dark savior

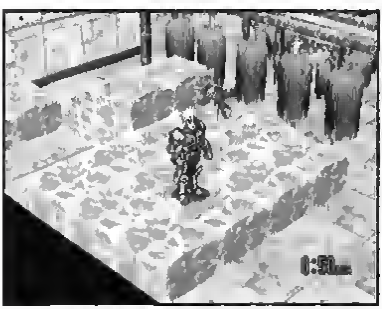
I'm an RPG fan, so it's nice to see a decent adventure released in the UK, even if most of the good stuff is still only available in Japan.

Dark Savior's story revolves around an evil soul-sucking monster called Bilan, who after being captured is caged up, shoved on a boat and sent off to Jailer's Island, which is one huge prison community. However, during the voyage Garian (the hero) is woken from a curious dream by alarms. Bilan has escaped and is roaming the ship killing everyone! But what is strange is that the dream Garian was having was of Bilan breaking loose and fleeing to Jailer's Island. Confused, Garian sets out to stop the monster...

This is about as much as I can say though, as the framework of Dark Savior's gameplay is quite ingenious. There is a timer on the first stage (the boat) and depending on how long it takes you to finish the level, you can go to one of three different stories (or parallels). After these, there are two more parallels to complete, making this a much larger game than it originally appears.

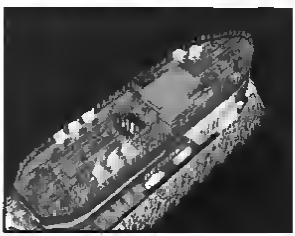
Each parallel contains many of the same locations, and also some unique to that particular story. What really makes it interesting is the attitude and situations around the characters. In one storyline the Warden may be hostile and blunt towards you, but in the next he could be all smiles and kindness. It is this play on events that really draws you back to the game - a kind of 'what would've happened if?' situation. But as well as the differences, Climax have made sure that there is some kind of running theme throughout which allows you a frame of reference for the whole story.

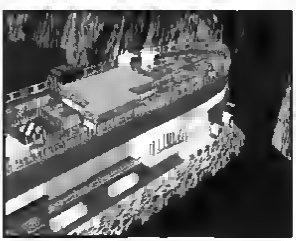
As far as the actual gameplay goes, it's mostly an enjoyable isometric platformer. The restart points are mostly quite fair, although there are a few exceptions. These exceptions are my only major criticism of the game, in particular the castle-in-the-sky level. It can take you ages to jump your way around it but one simple misjudgement and oops! Five minutes of play wasted and you'll have to do it all again. This is utterly frustrating, and to be honest it effects the overall mark. Also, on occasion you are thrown into a situation where jumping becomes more an



In the meat locker on board the ship. Hurry!

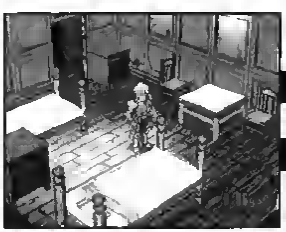
The intro sequence is all real-time polygons, and is very filmic in places with some lovely camera pans and zooms

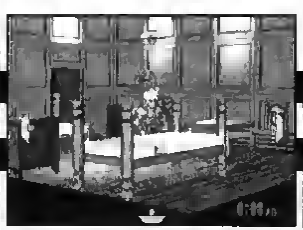




Hyperion Perspective

Although Dark Savior is primarily isometric, Climax have added a neat way around that problem of foreground objects obscuring your view of what lays ahead. By pushing certain buttons, or using the analogue pad if you have it, you can move the viewpoint in any direction, spin it or zoom in and out. This last feature is particularly useful when faced with a series of platforms and you should make full use of it before you start leaping around.

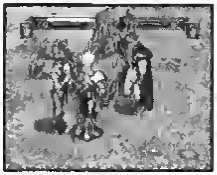




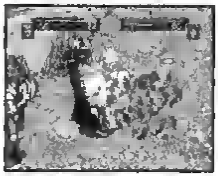
Round One. Fight!

Battles are handled in a very unique way for a role-playing game. They're basically one-on-one matches fought over three rounds. Movement is limited to just forward and backwards with a single attack and jump. But by keeping the fire button held down, you can power up a special move that can do a lot more damage. The special moves vary and are independent to each creature.

Ready for action



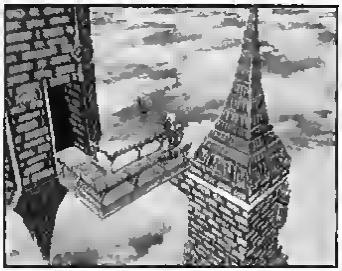
I'll 'ave you, mate



Hahaa!! Take that!

Oh, I lost.

Garlan finds himself inside a Carbon Freezing chamber! I wonder where they got the idea for that from..



The Hyperion Perspective allows the viewing of some quite impressive scenery

Gotcha!

During a scrap, you may see the words 'Capture Chance' flash up on screen for a brief moment (usually when an enemy is very low on energy). If you pull off a special move during this time, your foe is 'captured' and added to your inventory. In any future fights you have you can choose to substitute a captured monster for yourself.

act of faith rather than skill, due to vast areas of wall blocking your view.

From a technical standpoint, the graphics are very nice - well drawn, some nice locations and none of this pre-rendered stuff. The music is very good even if it falls short of outstanding. It's all chip sound and quite impressive for it. There is no rendered intro, but near the end of one of the parallels there is a nice long bit of FMV.

If you like your adventures with a bit of action, or like you action games with a bit of a story then this is well worth the effort.

Pieces of eight!

Throughout the game, you are followed by a blue bird from the Bounty Hunter's Agency called Jack. Occasionally he'll give you information but he's mostly there to rescue you whenever you do something stupid like drown in lava or step off a ledge into a bottomless pit below. He does charge money for each rescue though, so be sure you've got some handy. Another bird you will encounter regularly is Kaiser, who acts as a contact with the Agency (i.e. lets you save your game).

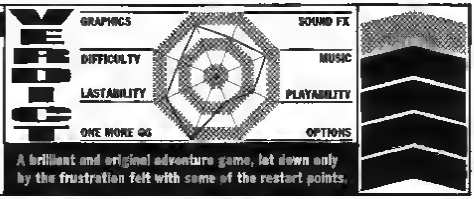
INFO BOX

FORMAT
Saturn

MAKER
Climax

GAME STYLE
Action RPG

PAL CONVERSION
Average borders



A brilliant and original adventure game, let down only by the frustration felt with some of the restart points.

FALCOM RPG PACK ON SATURN!

It is time for Role-Playing fans to rejoice. Falcom, one of the major RPG companies in Japan are going to be releasing a retro collection of their games on the Sega Saturn. This pack will contain the following games. *Ys I, Ys II, The Legend Of Xanadu* and *Dragonslayer - The Legend Of Heroes*. For anyone who knows these games, this is surely one major piece of good news. Ys I & II are possibly the finest RPG's ever created, with an amazingly compelling storyline spanning the two games. Dragonslayer is another brilliant adventure and Xanadu is a lesser known (over here) but equally important game.

One thing that these games can boast is some of the finest music in videogame history. Speaking from the PC Engine versions, the arrange versions of the tunes by Ryo Yonemitsu (who was also responsible for the music in the anime You're Under Arrest) are stunning, superb and utterly fantastic. The tunes from the Ys games are classic and timeless, and I can only shiver with anticipation at this new collection.

As you may have guessed, I rather like these games, but will this compilation get a release in America or the UK? Well, it's hard to tell, but if you know what's good for you then get down on our hands and knees and pray.

SOUL BLADE

You know, games like this really annoy me. There I am, moaning and groaning at how there are way too many beat 'em ups on console and how it's getting tedious and boring then WHAP! Along comes one that is so good that I can't help but praise it, encouraging the software companies to make more. It's a vicious and never ending spiral.

Soul Blade is different from your standard Tekken-style fisticuffs in the way that each character is blessed with a weapon to attack with and defend against their opponent's attacks. As well as your energy bar, you also have a weapon energy; the more you use your weapon to block, the more energy is taken off until it is broken and, basically, you're knackered. Unlike most beat 'em ups, blocking in Soul Blade is activated by pressing a button, rather than retreating and this takes a little getting used to. Once you've mastered it the combination of attack-attack-block comes in very handy.

Top swordplay action ahoy!

This really is a stunning conversion. The graphics are totally fantastic, with some gorgeous lighting effects and impressive 3D animated backdrops. These are particularly notable, especially the stage where you are on a raft, drifting on the water down a canyon. Another level has a castle background that is being attacked and slowly collapses as you fight it out! It's touches like these which make the game a joy to watch as well as play.

The characters are quite interesting, with the right number of babes and hunks, as well as way-out freaks like Voldo and his bizarre attacks.

Music is great too, with BGMs that are more dramatic and orchestral than those you usually get in a fighting game.

It's not a terribly difficult game in one-player arcade mode, but Namco have done things to increase lastability.

The Edge Master mode is a smart little idea - You choose a character and have to progress through a certain number of fight 'situations'. These can be from winning a bout by using only throws to surviving for a set amount of time. After certain fights, you gain a new weapon which you can choose at your leisure. Measuring up the speed-to-power ratio for the weapons is an important part of the strategy for this mode as it can make all the difference in some fights.

Be warned though - Edge Master mode can become quite difficult in places and very frustrating, but those of you who relish a good challenge will love it to bits.

I find it difficult to compare Soul Blade directly with something like Tekken 2. Tekken has more moves, more characters and more interesting techniques, but Soul Blade has massive swords and faster gameplay. They are both excellent fighting games and it's down to whether you like bare handed grappling or weapons. Personally, I'm not bothered and I love them both.

The pre-rendered intro is a true masterpiece - and very long too. It's been 'censored' a bit for the UK release though which is a bit of a dog.

Yowch! That's gotta hurt!

INFO BOX

FORMAT
PlayStation

MAKER
Namco

GAME STYLE
Fighting Game

PAL CONVERSION
Small Borders

VERDICT

GRAPHICS
SOUND FX
DIFFICULTY
MUSIC
LASTABILITY
PLAYABILITY
ONE MORE GO
OPTIONS

Maybe not as involved as **Tekken 2**, **Soul Blade** is still a thumpingly good beat 'em up in it's own right

game PREVIEWS

I've been at the latest PlayStation demo disc recently, so I thought I might give you a run down on what some of the latest games could be like. Remember, these are opinions based on demos and not the full products, which could differ.

First up is Sony's *Porsche Challenge*. I played an earlier demo of this a while back and wasn't too impressed, but since then things have been improved.

Graphics are very nice - the cars are superbly modelled and the backdrops are well constructed and pleasant enough. It's good to be able to drive through a suburban area as opposed to city streets or a racecourse. Handling is smooth, but maybe a little on the slow side. This may be upgradeable in the full version, or might just depend on which car you use.

As far as racing goes, in the demo you're only up against one person, so it gets a bit boring a bit quickly. But everything is there, and competently executed. Most probably one for the driving simulation buffs around.

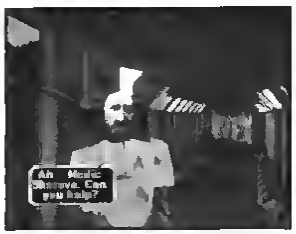
Next, we turn to *2 Extreme*, the sequel to *ESPN Extreme Games*, one of the earlier racers on the PlayStation. I think I must be one of the only people who liked the first game. It had lovely graphics, fast gameplay, punch-ups and plenty of courses. Sure, it could be frustrating at times, but if you don't worry about winning, it was great fun.

2 Extreme. 2 Crap 4 my taste.

Something seems to have gone drastically wrong with the sequel. The graphics are drab and basic (the cars are VERY blocky) and on the demo level at least, it's extremely dark (a trend that seems unfortunately to be spreading in PlayStation games). The jumps and gates seem to have vanished giving the player little more to do that avoid pedestrians and the odd vehicle. It's just plain boring. You have been warned.

Porsche Challenge

Lifeforce Tenka is Psygnosis' attempt to breathe some life back into the Doom genre. It looks like Alien Trilogy, but even darker, if that's possible. To me it just doesn't sit right. Sure, it's technically fine, but there's nothing that really grabs you to bother playing this over any other corridor game. One to keep an eye on, but approach with caution.

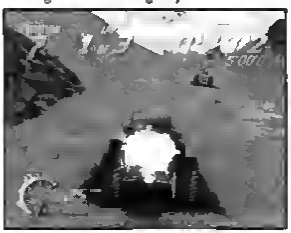


Sentient. What a wierd looking git.

Monster Trucks is another Psygnosis driving sim, with a little more freedom than your average racing game. Because it's all off-road, you can pretty much go anywhere, although it won't win you any races. Graphics are pretty, with some nice lens flare, although this too gets a little dim in places. But the rolling hills combines with lava-filled pits make for an interesting backdrop to the race. It can be tricky to control at first, and I can see that the appeal may soon die off after the first couple of days.

Sentient is an interesting beast. It's viewed with a Doom-style perpective, but has the gameplay style of a point-and-click adventure. There are a multitude of actions and conversation choices you can use, almost too many in fact, but it could make for an involving game. The graphics are a bit 'close' at times and in the demo level you have a time limit to achieve your goal. I hope the time is fairer in the real thing, as you've barely got time to talk to people and get used to it all before it's over. It would be a real shame if this pressure to move was in the final version as looking around and conversing with other characters takes a while and is the keystone of a good adventure. Having to rush it takes a bit of the atmosphere away really.

This could well be a nice step forward for adventures, even if all the characters in the game are a bit gooly!



Monster Trucks. Average Fun

Lifeforce Tenka. Yes, Doom again

D&D ON CONSOLE

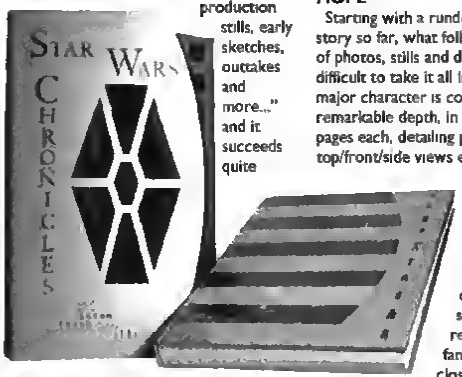
Capcom will be releasing a Dungeons & Dragons collection CD on both Saturn and PlayStation. I can't say for sure, but what I've heard indicates that the arcade conversion of thier scrolling beat 'em up is one of the titles, or at least something very similar. Now when will they get on and do Aliens vs Predator?

on the PAGE

STAR WARS CHRONICLES
By Deborah Fine and Aeon Inc.
VIRGIN
£100 * 315 pages * Full Colour

This book really looks the business, and no-one can deny it. Coming in a huge and extravagant cardboard casing, the book slides out as a whopping hardcover with fold-outs, gold text and lovely glossy pages

Star Wars Chronicles sets out to be "The most complete and exclusive collection ever assembled of photographs, behind-the-scenes production stills, early sketches, outtakes and more..." and it succeeds quite admirably, despite the notable lack of Special Edition material



The book is divided into sections, which I will deal with in turn

THE SAGA'S CONCEPTS

This 'prologue' provides some very interesting information on the Star Wars universe

The Galaxy's Structure shows the positions of the various areas of the galaxy from The Core Worlds to the Outer Rim Territories, and gives a brief description of each. Next comes a timeline which dates the events leading up to A New Hope (i.e. Han's birth, Clone Wars end etc.) Following this is a section from *The Journal of the Whills*, which describes the rise of the Empire over the Old Republic and will be the theme of the new prequel movies

Next up comes technical information, star system distances, and notes on the Han Solo and Lando trilogy novels

Now comes the good bit. Folding out from the centre, there are several pages of photos of ships and people, printed *to scale* with each other! Ever wanted to know how the Death Star compares with Cloud City? Or how big the asteroid monster is compared to Vader's Super Star Destroyer? It's all here

STAR WARS: A NEW HOPE

Starting with a rundown of the story so far, what follows is a multitude of photos, stills and designs that it's difficult to take it all in. Every ship and major character is covered in remarkable depth, in an average of 2-3 pages each, detailing prototype models, top/front/side views etc

There is a special section purely for the Cantina aliens, which shows photos of every creature designed, some even I don't recognise! Also, alien fans will delight at the close-ups of the models on the Hologame that is played on the Falcon.

At the end of this, and the subsequent chapters on the movies, is a complete timeline of the movie's development, from original idea to the opening in theatres, including special notes and a list of deleted scenes with some pretty exclusive pictures (like the Power Station at Anchorhead)

STAR WARS HOLIDAY SPECIAL

Bith mask and gloves.

It's extremely difficult to track this down as it's never been released on video, so this little section is a real treat. It contains photos of Chewie's family, a McQuarrie painting of a Wookie home, new alien masks and clips of the mini cartoon that first featured Boba Fett. Speaking of which, we have here

Jedi *Director Richard Marquand and Producer Robert Watts in charge of an AT-ST (The one Chewie and friends hijack!)*

SIX PAGES of photos of the Boba Fett costume in various stages of design and from every angle imaginable, including a shot of all the individual parts. This is a Fett fan's dream come true.

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

Again, countless photos, early Taun Taun models, shots of the asteroid interior model, the Emperor (played by an old woman in green make-up!) and nice, but not enough pics of the bounty hunters. Slave I is given the full treatment and some of the new ILM techniques (like Go-Motion) are given a run-through

One of the missing scenes on Tatooine from Star Wars: A New Hope

RETURN OF THE JEDI

Jabba's Palace aliens are detailed in the same way as the Cantina section, and there is a section entitled *Obi-Wan's Confession* which expands slightly on Ben's responsibility for Vader. Also interesting is a photo that shows the pilots of the AT-ST are Director Richard Marquand and Producer Robert Watts, and a break down of the components of Vader's mask. Mentioned in the scenes

cut are the sandstorm on Tatooine and Vader's choking of an Imperial Guard.

THE SAGA CONTINUES

This section goes beyond the movies, covering the two Ewok films, the Star Tours ride and the books and comics that have followed (shown chronologically).

Making the Death Star for Jedi

Overall, this is a tremendous book for the Star Wars fanatic. It's beautifully presented, and very high quality although I feel that the text could have been more interesting and expanded upon However, if you've already got *The Star Wars Archives* and are desperate for more comprehensive references then it is ideal. Of course it is very expensive, and out of the budget range of many people, but for the dedicated Star Wars fan, this is really something you cannot afford to be without.

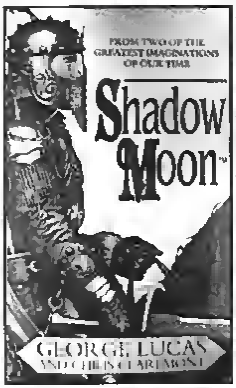
SHADOW MOON
By George Lucas and Chris Claremont
BANTAM BOOKS
£4.99 paperback * 452 pages

I find it a little odd that the cover information of this book in no way states that this a continuation of the story laid down Lucas's fantasy movie *Willow*. Yet that is exactly what it is

Thirteen years have gone by since the climax of the movie, where Willow destroyed the evil Queen Bavmorda. Elora Danan stayed in the city of Tir Asleen, with Madmartigan and Sorsha to care for her. But unexpectedly, the city was destroyed - a great gouge wiped clean through the surrounding mountainside. Only Elora survived.

The book starts, after an introductory chapter, with Willow (taking the name Thorn Drumheller) arriving at the site of Tir Asleen accompanied by the brownies (tiny people) Franjean and Rool Willow-Thorn has made considerable progress in his magical abilities since the movie, and now sports a bearded, weather-beaten look.

After some obscure sorcerous activities, he encounters a pack of Death Dogs and a Daikini (normal-sized guy) called Geryn Havilhand. After a quick scrap, Thorn joins Geryn on the road, a journey which eventually leads to Elora, now a spoiled little brat, as she reaches the Day of Ascension. But strange forces are at work, in the guise of someone or something that looks almost exactly like Willow, who has stole his true name and form.



I'll not beat about the bush, this book is not an easy read. It takes a fair bit of concentration to keep track of what's going on and is the verbal equivalent of a very dense piece of coconut cake. The descriptions of Thorn's perceptions can sometimes be overly complex and confusing, and it does take a while for events to move from one point to the next, with some scenes being drastically over-written. Also, quite unlike the movie, it's quite a grim tale. Nothing but misfortune and almost-death, with very little to lighten the mood.

But saying that, if you're a fan of the movie and want to delve a bit deeper into the world of Willow, then it does have it's staying power. Even though Madmartigan and Sorsha are no longer a part of the story, it is interesting enough to follow Thorn himself. Just don't expect the same feel as the film.

US GOVERNMENT 'EXPLAINS' ROSWELL ALIENS

Fifty years ago, on a rancher's piece of land several miles from Roswell, New Mexico, *something* crashed. The following morning, the US Air Force issued a statement that the remains of a flying saucer had been recovered. Promptly, this statement was retracted and the 'weather balloon' explanation was given in it's place.

Years of investigation have followed, and the now famous Roswell story refuses to be laid to rest. Despite hideous fakes like the supposed 'Alien Autopsy' footage, there has been a core element of fact unearthed about the events, along with corresponding statements from many witnesses that are trustworthy and sincere.

In July 1997, another statement was given by the Air Force. Apparently the bodies recovered at the crash site were not alien beings, but test dummies used in Project Mogul. It has taken them fifty years to think that one up. Impressed?

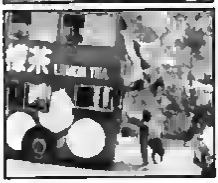
To me, this statement is so ridiculously unfeasible that it seems that they are deliberately trying to draw the public's attention back to the Roswell incident. But why? Do they want to gauge public opinion? Are they getting us ready for some Earth-shattering event as the millennium looms upon us? After years of denying everything, why come out with this information now, when they could just as well not bothered? The UFO phenomenon seems to be reaching an all time public awareness high, and it's not just down to the X-Files. Think about it.

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

Test dummy | Alien Being

FAMOUS HOLLYWOOD RIP-OFFS no.2

Last issue, we exposed Free Willy's more than passing similarity to a Japanese animated movie. But now, we have something that is such an utterly shameless copy that it almost defies belief. Yes, I'm talking about ageing action movie Tango & Cash. When I went to see this in the cinema all those years ago, I was already a fan of Hong Kong Kung Fu genius Jackie Chan and his movies. But when the opening scene played itself out, I become deathly cold at the blatant unoriginality before my eyes. It was almost an action-by-action rip-off (even down to some camera angles) as a scene in Police Story (also at the start of the movie) which was made several years before and was available on video by this time. In fact, there's only one (minor) difference in the whole scene. I heard once that this was a homage to Jackie, but anyone with an ounce of respect for his movies would not steal his ideas an parade them as their own

POLICE STORY		TANGO & CASH
	The bad guys are approaching in a large vehicle (bus). Loner hero stops passer-by's car to block the road ahead. Hero stands in front of car.	The bad guys are approaching in a large vehicle (tanker). Loner hero stops his own car to block the road ahead. Hero stands in front of car.
	View from behind showing vehicle approaching on left hand side of the screen.	View from behind showing vehicle approaching on left hand side of the screen.
	Hero pulls out gun and empties it in a nice close-up for the camera.	Hero pulls out gun and empties it in a nice close-up for the camera.
	Hero reloads gun, then spins the barrel as he flicks it shut.	Hero reloads gun, then spins the barrel as he flicks it shut.
	A big visual point is made of the Hero taking careful aim Hero fires a shot into the air to spook the bad guys	A big visual point is made of the Hero taking careful aim Hero fires 3 shots at the vehicle to spook the bad guys.
	A quick visual of the driver's panic, followed by a foot-on-brake shot. The vehicle skids to a halt just in front of the hero, sending the villains flying out of the front windows onto the ground.	A quick visual of the driver's panic, followed by a foot-on-brake shot. The vehicle skids to a halt just in front of the hero, sending the villains flying out of the front windows onto the ground.

on the SCREEN

NEON GENESIS EVANGELION

Released on video by A.D. Vision
Tape 1 - 60 mins
Tape 2 - 60 mins

This is a big name anime in Japan. It is the first anime series in a long while by Gainax, the team behind classics like Gunbuster and Nadia. The setting, as ever, is the near future - giant walking beings known as Angels are threatening the Earth and Nerv, a special government agency is the only defence against them. They have developed massive bio-mechanical humanoids called Evangelions, controlled by young men and women, which are designed to take on the Angels in vicious hand-to-hand combat. No-one knows anything about these mysterious Angels, and stranger still is the fact that the only people who are able to 'interface' and control the Evangelions are those born nine months after a meteor impact that destroyed half of humanity.

Shinji Ikari is one of these people. The shy son of the Evangelion project leader, but with no love for his father, he is thrust into the responsibility of defending the planet. He finds himself helpless at the controls until suddenly....Sorry, but I'm not telling. You'll have to see it for yourselves.

I can see many parallels between this and Gainax' masterwork Gunbuster; An emotionally volatile teenager is pushed into a position of responsibility that they're not sure they can handle. Giant robots Saving the Earth from a mysterious alien foe etc.

But even though Gunbuster is by far the superior story, Evangelion is no slouch itself. The first tape is little more than an introduction with a cliff-hanging ending that leaves you aching for more. The second tape get more into the story, deepening the mystery and developing character.

The animation is very good throughout, although it does lack many of those little extra special touches that are usually apparent in Gainax' work. The dubbing is quite acceptable too, the main characters are more than adequate. Some of the minor roles are as usual, somewhat painful to listen to, especially the 'Gruff Army Type' voices that are way overdone.

These first two tapes form the base for what could be a very exciting and intriguing anime series and come highly recommended.

URUSEI YATSURA - TV SERIES 8

Released by Anime Projects
100 mins

The gang is back in another dose of bizarre humour that only the Japanese could have come up with.

The first episode concerns a rather dim Dracula as he tries to suck the blood from Lum. He gets more than he bargains for when he comes across the Moroboshi family's garlic breath! As he's not one to give up easily, he uses his bat companion to lure Lum, Ataru and Ran to his spooky lodgings.

Episode two has Lum travel back in time to teach the young Ataru not to fool around with girls. Her methods are rather unorthodox - she places a doll on Ataru's head that gives him a shock when ever he touches anyone female. Naturally, Ataru finds out and does his best to put and end to Lum's plan.

Next up, Ten's infatuation with a cute flower girl leads to a bitter rivalry as Ataru tries to muscle in. After buying a plant from her, Ataru tries his best to kill it, giving him the excuse to see the girl again for advice.

Finally, Ataru gets a little wet as he tries to date a beautiful rain spirit that has just moved in across the street.

It's all typical Urusei Yatsura stuff, which means it's very, very funny. I can't really recommend this to the inexperienced anime viewer as it's visually quite old and you need a good understanding of the characters to really enjoy it. If you really want to get in to the wonderful universe of Urusei Yatsura, try movie 1 or 6 first, but if you are already a fan, then this should be on your 'A' list.

MACROSS PLUS PART 4

Released by Manga Video
45 mins

Finally, Manga Video have released the final part of this excellent sci-fi series. This tape continues in the same style as the previous episodes and builds up to an exciting climax as hotshot pilot Isamu sets out to destroy the 'Ghost X-9', a pilotless super-aircraft. Things really heat up as Isamu and Guld face off in a desperate aerial battle while the sentient computer personality Sharon Apple captures Myung and controls the minds of the people of Macross City.

It's all brilliantly animated as usual and a fitong end to one of the better Manga Video releases in recent years (The dubbing is fine too, which is a bonus). Now when are they going to release Giant Robo ?'

STAR TREK - FIRST CONTACT

NTSC Laserdisc release. CLV. 2 sides. 111 mins.

After the decidedly lukewarm affair that was Generations comes the first movie to star only the Next Generation crew.

When news of a Borg attack reaches Captain Picard, he joins the battle in the new-and-improved Enterprise and helps destroy the Borg ship. But a small escape craft shoots out and creates a vortex to travel back into the past -

their aim is to disrupt the launch site of the craft that was the reason for First Contact between a human and alien race. By doing this, their task of assimilating the Earth will be made to much easier.

Naturally Picard and Co. follow them back and eventually meet up with the inventor of the first warp ship. But there is a threat as the Borg infiltrate the Enterprise and begin to assimilate the crew.

Out of all of the Star Trek films, First Contact is easily the most accessible to both fans and non-fans alike. Director Jonathan Frakes said that to prepare himself, he had sat down and watched movies like *Close Encounters Of The Third Kind* and *Aliens* so he could 'learn from the best'. And it definitely shows.

It's far more of an action movie than the rest with a good steady pace to the it and a story that doesn't drop into needless sentiment. There are some memorable sequences, like the battle on the Enterprise's deflector dish, with the usual high quality effects from ILM and a lovely soundtrack by Star Trek veteran Jerry Goldsmith.

Some of the crew members are a little under-used, but this allows the script to keep on track and concentrate on the more important characters. Picard's character is shown in a way that you would never have seen in the TV series, with his vengeful streak coming out as his bottled up hatred for the Borg and what they did to him is released.

This NTSC Laserdisc has no extras unfortunately, but no matter as the picture quality is crystal clear and the THX enhanced sound is a joy to listen to. Really, it doesn't matter is you're a Star Trek fan or not, this is one of the best sci-fi- action movies around.

LETTERS PAGE

Oooh, well in response to issue 1, I've received almost two letters from my loyal readership. Call it one. Due to reasons of not supplying a name, this person shall remain anonymous:

I think that your fanzine Tokyo Fan would benefit if you included a retro anime section where you review older classic Manga videos which are still well worth buying. This would be useful for people new to anime who want to know about the films that established Manga in this country, such as Akira for example.

Well, that's such a poundingly good idea, I think I'll go one up from it. How about a feature next issue of some of the essential Anime videos for beginners? Now don't say I never give you anything.

By the way, issue 3 is out around the last week in October, price £1.90. Details at the front of the mag as usual.

BIG CHANGES AT MANGA VIDEO

According to a report in the August 1997 issue of *Empire* magazine, big things are going down at Manga Video. Marvin Gleicher, one of the US Big Boys has started to turn the company upside-down by reducing the price and increasing the running time of their releases. *Detonator Orgun* is the first of these new-policy videos with a running time of 150 minutes at only £13.99. While this is no doubt good news for anime fans, will he be doing anything about Manga Video UK's dreadful dubbing? I doubt it.

NEW ADVENTURE GAMES

Virus on the Saturn.

New on PlayStation in Japan is *Parasite Eve*, by Square. It's an adventure game with some amazing pre-rendered backdrops. It looks like a Resident Evil sort of game, with some massive spooky monsters to shoot. It's one to keep an eye our for.

Also, we have *Virus* by Hudson Soft on Saturn. Being touted as a 'Cyberpunk Adventure Game' it's anime through and through, with some classy character designs and impressive detail. Judging by Hudson's past record, this will probably be a winner. However, it's not too likely that it will ever reach the UK.

Another vaguely-adventurish game for both machines is Takara's *Eberouge*. It's all anime and it's all gals. Sounds like the perfect combination.

Eberouge

at the MOVIES

BATMAN AND ROBIN

The first Batman movie was cool. The second was superb. The third was pretty good - nice fresh visuals but a little too comic-like. Now comes Batman and Robin.

From the beginning, it sounds like a recipe for success. Hunky George Clooney as the man himself, with Big Arnie as Mr Freeze. And babes like Alicia Silverstone as Batgirl and Uma Therman as Poison Ivy. Big sets, tons of action and special effects, nothing can go wrong.

Or can it?

The movie throws you straight in at the deep end. Alfred notifies Batty of a 'new villain' who is terrorising the city, so off he and his shaven-headed buddy go to kick some serious Arnie butt.

But something feels wrong already. Ten minutes into the big opening action chase, you find yourself beginning to twiddle your thumbs. However, it all turns from bad to worse. Uma's opening scene shows her as an unbelievably stereotypical dweeb scientist working

Uma looks the part, but the overdone acting just plain sucks!

under some messy-haired crazy loon who wants to take over the world. When she discovers his plan, he tries to kill her by pushing her over into some equipment surrounded by poisoned plants.

Now just raise your hand when things begin to get a bit familiar. Not content with dying, she rises from the glowing earth a transformed being, a super bad gal. If this all sounds like a very poor rehash of Catwoman then it's because it

Poor Arnie get loads of useless one-liners. Again!

is. Except whereas Catwoman was dealt with intelligently and realistically, this is just plain dumb.

And if that sounds bad, then you have a few surprises yet. The story is at best, crap and predictable and at worst, non-existent. Now I'm not someone who usually complains about a thin storyline - after all I loved Jurassic Park and Twister - but the main driving force is that poor Alfred (the best actor in the movie) is seriously ill with a disease that only Freeze can cure. Blah blah. How original. Further more, there is a subplot where Ivy uses her charm to turn Batman and Robin against each other. Yawn. Worse than that is the dialogue, which is uninteresting and serves only to give the characters something to do inbetween fights.

It isn't a complete disaster though. Arnie is always watchable in any film (well, almost), and...erm, well that's about it. I like ER and I like Clooney but he's a poor choice for Bruce Wayne. He just doesn't have the look. And if you've never seen Pulp Fiction, you'd think that Uma Therman can't act to save her life.

Who can you blame? Well firstly, Tim Burton for not directing it. Joel Schumaker for using the same visual themes as the previous film, and ...oh I could go on forever. Just don't watch it, it's crap OK?

THE FIFTH ELEMENT

If there's any excuse *not* to see Batman and Robin (as if you need another one anyway), then this is it. This is one of the most appealing and interesting sci-fi films since Stargate.

Set, obviously, in the future, the Earth is faced with a strange and enormous ball of energy (or something) floating in space, with one intenoon - to wipe out everything it encounters. But there is hope in a half-legend that has been passed down through the years to a select few, the 'fifth element,' when surrounded by the other four becomes a super-weapon that is the only thing that can save mankind.

This fifth element as it turns out, is a young girl, the only survivor from an attacked craft, and reconstructed to her true form. Showing that she is more than human, she escapes from the lab, leaps off a building (as you do) and goes straight through the roof of taxi-driver/lonely guy Corban Dallas (Bruce Willis).

And so it begins, with everyone trying to recover the four stones (elements) for their own purposes, good or ill.

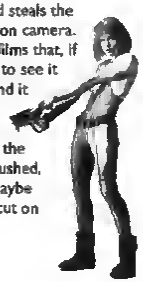
Visually the film is a stunner, with some of the most beautiful effects realisations since Cloud City in The Empire Strikes Back. The cityscape with is hundreds of flying vehicles shooing around is very impressive, and everything is designed to look so cool.

The plot is sufficient, the pace of the movie good and the characters very appealing. The DJ character can be a tad annoying, but you soon get used to him. Yet again Gary Oldman proves that he can look and sound totally different in every movie that he does. He pulls off his bad guy persona with ease.

It's nice to see a movie that uses a lot of underused actors. Bruce Willis is the only big name in the film, Ian Holm is a joy to watch as ever, Brion James (Leon in Blade Runner) acts his part well (but he's getting a bit tubby), but Milla Jovovich who plays Leeloo (the Fifth Element) is superb and steals the show whenever she's on camera.

This is one of those films that, if you liked it, you want to see it again straight away. And it loses nothing second time round. The only criticism I have is that the ending seems a little rushed, and possibly edited. Maybe we'll see a director's cut on Laserdisc or video.

I sure hope so.



THE LOST WORLD - JURASSIC PARK

I love the first movie. Whatever anyone else says, I think it's one of the most exciting and impressive films made in a long while. But I was worried that the sequel was going to be just a remake, and now the dinosaurs have been seen the impact may not be there anymore.

As far as the central core of the action is concerned, yes it is the same. But Spielberg has managed to expand the story and come up with even more impressive action sequences. It's as though he sat down and said, for example, "What's more frightening than a T-Rex attacking people? Ah, two T-Rex's attacking people!"

The graphics and general effects are absolutely superb as expected, with several new varieties of dino and loads more on screen and interacting all the time. However, you just don't get the same stunned astonishment as you did with Jurassic Park.

The storyline is less compelling than the original film and it does seem a little less 'solid.' The characters aren't as well developed, giving you less sympathy for them and their situation. Jeff Goldblum is as good as ever in his role as Ian Malcom though, and his occasional quips and smart remarks help lighten the film up considerably.

Elements of Spielberg's genius are apparent in places as usual, with some very memorable scenes, such as the trailer hanging over the edge of the cliff with Malcom's girlfriend crawling across the cracking glass at the bottom that could plunge her to her doom.

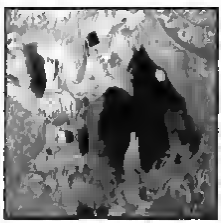
Also the T-Rex storming through the city in the finale is quite a spectacle, although it looks strangely dwarfed by the buildings around it, and far less threatening.

If you disliked Jurassic Park, then you'll hardly get your kicks from The Lost World. It's nowhere near as good as the original, but still a visual treat and a brilliant movie in it's own right.

audio REVIEWS

— GAME MUSIC —

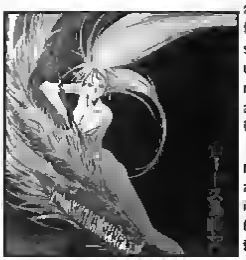
FINAL FANTASY VI - GRAND FINALE
CAT: PSCN-5004 * 11 tracks * 54:32 mins



There is no missing this on the shelf - The cover is a bright red pencil drawing of an amalgam of creatures with a 'fair maiden' in the background. And not a single bit of text.

Anyway, this is an orchestral arrangement of music from FFVI. Unfortunately, I've never played it so any comparisons with the original music are out the window. Sorry.

First impressions are very good - The CD opens with a nice brooding piece (with some of the best and fullest sounding orchestration in a game related soundtrack I've heard) and flows into what was probably the title theme - a good tune with a sufficient hint of the quietly heroic about it.



Track 2 is definitely my fave - creeping along quietly until it reaches a resounding finish, repeating itself a few times for good measure. The famous Chocobo music crops up in track 5, albeit tweaked around a bit. The rest of the music is competently arranged, with a couple of solo violins pushing the feel of the CD to the side of classical music. This is further reinforced by the operatic final track. Now I'm not a big fan of opera or anything, but this is professionally sung and very pleasant to listen too - and shows just how serious the Japanese take their game music.

All in all, if you like a combination between movie music and classical, then I can recommend this without hesitation.

— ANIME SOUNDTRACKS —

RECORD OF LODOSS WAR VOL 1
ANIMANGA
CAT: AM3 * 16 tracks * 40:15 mins

Released on the Animanga label, making it widely available in shops like Virgin and MVC, ROLW 1 is the first of three CD's of music from the highly acclaimed fantasy anime series, unfortunately not yet available in the UK.

It is for the most part orchestral, and has a fuller sound to it than you would expect from an anime TV series, for example. As far as the composition goes, it's generally what you can expect from the average competent anime OST. The tracks are good enough without being stunning, and it is more listenable than a lot of big movie music.

There are two songs mixed in, both with female vocals, and both inoffensive enough not to disrupt the flow of the CD. It's a good disc for casual listening and although you may not want to rush out immediately and buy it, I doubt that you'd regret it if you did.

PLEASE SAVE MY EARTH ANIMANGA
Cat: AM6 * 16 tracks * 44:07 mins

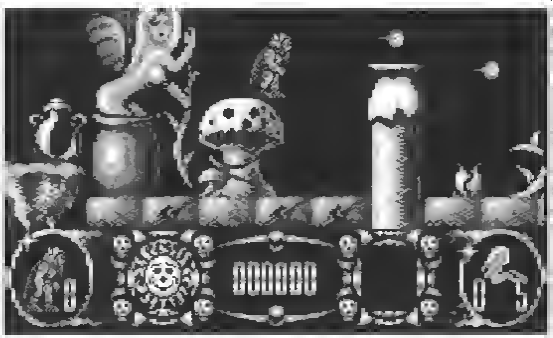
From the title, and cover of this CD you may well expect a quiet, gentle selection of music, and you'd be dead right to. It starts off with a lovely Enya-esque song, a delight to listen to, and continues to use vocals effectively throughout. 'A Song Without A Song' stands out as one of the best tracks. It is a little out of the ordinary, but original and powerful in places.

Most of the more quiet soundtracks fall into the trap of being quite bland, but Please Save My Earth it atmospheric and original enough, with a select few tracks that enhance the rest. In short, it's lovely. If you like Enya, or just fancy something that you can relax to, then you can't go far wrong with this.

RETRO GAMING

Captain Rover Pawstrong. There's a name from the past. A dog in a fishbowl space helmet, this was the main character in Star Paws, a very popular game by Software Projects. It first surfaced on the Commodore 64 and went on to be converted quite well to the Spectrum. The main aim of Star Paws was the Roadrunner-esque task of catching a number of very fast running birds. To do this, you had to be very cautious because running straight at them only caused them to peg it at high speed. Instead, a careful mix of moving towards and away was needed until you you were in the perfect position to smack the fire button and rugby tackle them to the ground.

The graphics in Star Paws were great, with loads of fast and smooth parallax scrolling, and the playing area divided into a red lunar surface and mines below-ground. But the most memorable thing about the game was the classic Rob Hubbard music, which must have been ripped and used by every demo group going! Stonking Stuff.



Stormlord on the Commodore 64. Some of the best music in town

Speaking of brilliant music on the '64 (of which there was a lot), Stormlord had some stunning tunes but none more so than the title music. With impressive samples bells and speech (St-St-Stormlord) and one of the finest tunes in existence, this was almost worth the price of the game alone.

If I may change track and go onto arcade games a minute, there's a shoot 'em up by Irem (I think) that I just can't recall the name of. You played a segmented dragon, complete with R-Type style beam laser and little man sitting on top. When you flew down to the ground, the little man dismounted and you could run around picking up things and shooting with your crossbow. You also had the ability, whan controlling the dragon, to loop your tail around in a circle to protect yourself from flying bullets and the like. It was a horizontal blaster and was converted quite well to the Amiga at one point. I'm sure it had the word 'Dragon' somewhere in the title so if you know please drop me a line to put me out of my misery.

And while I'm not on the subject, does anyone out there have any old Japanese game music CD's they want to sell? I'm after anything at all really, from original game BGM to arrange versions/perfect collections, although I'm more likely to go for any Sega or Falcom stuff. Please let me know at the address at the front of the mag.

You know, it's nice to see the Dracula/Castlevania series still going strong. I always had a soft spot for these titles, especially for Dracula X on the PC Engine CD-ROM. This was a truly fantastic piece of software that showed off the Engine. Konami had really sorted themselves out with some very clever parallax scrolling and beautifully drawn graphics. The best thing about it was that the levels were split into two different routes, so if you got stuck on one, you could try the other instead. It meant that you could complete the game without seeing everything, but the compulsion to go back and get 100% was so strong that you had to try.

It was a bit tricky in some places but it was worth the effort. The music was smart too - some excellent arrangements of the familiar old tunes, and there were some great surprises, like when a huge ravening vampire wolf smashed through a wall and started chasing you! Yikes!

With Sonic Jam out in Japan, the little blue guy could well be coming back into fashion. But out of all the originals, which was the best? The Master System version. I'm not kidding either, it really was the bees knees, and from the gameplay point of view, it tramped the Mega Drive version into the ground.

For a start, the levels were far more varied, with some autoscrolling up or across. The Mega Drive version suffered from a lack of variety and levels that were far too long in places. Not so on the Master System. One of the stages that sticks in my mind was the final one, where you were up in the sky on Robotnik's airship or something. You had to leap about very carefully, avoiding huge electricity surges zapping all around you. This was a level that required top platform skills and was far more exciting and intense than it's 16-Bit brother.

Another plus point was that the Master System music was done by none other than Yuzo Koshiro, the genius behind the Super (Revenge of) Shinobi, Bare (Streets of Rage) Knuckle and Actraiser soundtracks. Even though the Master System's poor little sound chip can't compare, the tunes were far more catchy. It's well worth getting on the cheap if you can find it.

Here's a question. Whatever happened to Power Drift on the Mega Drive? It was announced quite early on in the life of the machine and I was looking forward to it for ages, but it just never happened. Not even a single screen shot. Sure, it would have been a nightmare to convert, but they managed it fairly well on the PC Engine.

Dynamite Dux was another one that didn't come out on the Mega Drive, which is a pity as it was a decent game. Did you know that the music was the last to be done for Sega by 'Hiro'? I point this out because he was the God of arcade tunes in the mid 80's with a CV that couldn't fail to impress: Hang On, Space Harrier, Out Run, Enduro Racer, Fantasy Zone, After Burner, Power Drift and Dynamite Dux.

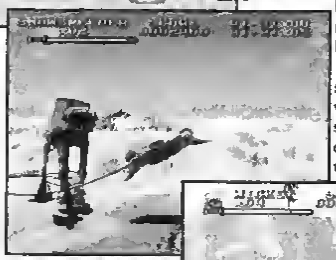
This guy did all the classics! If anyone knows what he's doing now, please let me know.

As this is a Star Warsy issue, I suppose I'd better go over some of the games that have been around over the years. I'll skip the VCS stuff and go straight to the first Star Wars game that I played - Atari's wireframe arcade version. This has remained a favourite throughout the years and I'll always shove some money in if I see it anywhere.

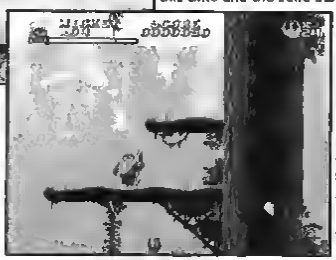
It took the form of an X-Wing cockpit view as you attacked the Empire's dreaded Death Star. The first stage consisted of blasting Tie fighters out in space, the second was an assault across the Death Star surface (including gun towers) and the third was the classic trench run. It was great fun, and you got a lot of satisfaction from seeing the Death Star explode in a flash of lines. The music was brilliant and there was tons of speech, quite rare in those days.

The Empire Strikes Back arcade game followed in the same vein, allowing you to bring down AT-ATs with you tow cable (great!). But the Jedi coin-op was totally different. This time they opted for an isometric view, with the player

guiding a speeder bike or the Millennium Falcon up the screen, shooting things and avoiding trees and girders etc. I never really liked this one as it was way too hard, I couldn't get off the first level!



In more recent years, the SNES was blessed with the Star Wars licence in a series of side-on platform games. The first one was noteable for it's incredibly faithful music, especially the Jawa tune which was almost identical to the original!



Empire too had some great tunes, and the settings of the movie made for a visual treat. Gameplay had become harder and simpler though, with a password system to help you along.

By the time Jedi came out it was getting a bit tired. The gameplay was just running and blasting with very little skill involved. The final level was great fun but tricky, with utmost concentration needed to pilot the Falcon out of the Death Star innards.

About a year after I was wishing someone would do a polygon-updated version of the original arcade game, someone did a polygon-updated version of the original arcade game. It was Sega this time and the solid 3D graphics gave it a superb visual feel. The Star Destroyers looked massive and skimming across their surfaces was excellent fun. It was followed by a good but hard conversion for the dead 32X, but due to a lack of texture mapping it now looks pretty dated.

Tokyo Fan ISSUE ONE STILL AVAILABLE

THE WORLD OF CHINDOGU - USELESS INVENTIONS
ANIME GAMES ON THE PC ENGINE
HIROSHIMA PEACE PARK IN JAPAN
REVIEWS OF SEXY PARODIUS, DESTRUCTION DERBY 2 AND MORE!
PATLABOR 2 SOUNDTRACK, YUZO KOSHIRO'S MISTY BLUE
AND MORE SPACE-FILLERS THAN YOU CAN SHAKE A STICK INSECT AT!

BETTER THAN A CASE OF CRABS